

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 271153Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9061
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2641

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 22652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, BM, BG
SUBJ: BANGLADESH TAKES DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES AND ALLOWS
PRESS REPORTING ON ARAKANESE MUSLIM QUESTION

REF: A) DACCA 2198 (NOTAL); (B) DACCA 2349 (NOTAL); (C)
RANGOON 1379 (NOTAL)

1. BDG HAS DECIDED, REPORTEDLY AT PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL
MEETING APRIL 26, TO SUMMON CHIEF OF MISSION OF SEVERAL
COUNTRIES TO PRESENT TO THEM BDG VERSION OF PROBLEMS
CONCERNING ARKANSES MUSLIMS. AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN CALLED
TO MFA (BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL) AND FROM MFA WE UNDERSTAND
CHINESE AMBASSADOR IS ALSO BEING SUMMONED. DIRECTOR
GENERAL, NATIONAL SECURITY INTELLIGENCE (DG, NSI), TOLD
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POLCOUNSELOR THAT SOVIET, SOME ISLAMIC (INCLUDING
PAKISTANI) AND POSSIBLY INDIAN CHIEFS OF MISSION ARE ALSO
TO BE BRIEFED.

2. APRIL 26 PRESS CARRIED SMALL ITEM THAT BANGLADESH
RIFLES (BDR) HAS PUSHED BACK INTO BURMA SOME MUSLIMS
WHO HAD, THE REPORT SAID, BEEN SENT OUT OF BURMA. HOWEVER,

APRIL 27 PRESS CARRIED MAJOR FRONT PAGE STORIES WHICH WERE RESULT OF BDG PRESS BRIEFING AFTERNOON OF APRIL 26. TYPICAL HEADLINE FROM BANGLADESH OBSERVER IS "20,000 BURMESE MUSLIMS ENTER BANGLADESH" WHILE BANGLADESH TIMES EMBELLISHES ITS WITH SUB-HEADLINE "HARROWING TALES OF TORTURE, LOOT, ARSON". VERNACULAR PRESS REPORTS IN MORE ELOQUENT FASHION WITH AZAD, ALWAYS ALERT TO SLIGHTS TO MUSLIMS, ALLEGIN THAT ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND HAVE ARRIVED IN COX'S BAZAR AREA.

3. PRESS ACCOUNTS REPORT FIRING ON THE BORDER BY BURMESE ARMY, BUT DG, NSI, SAID THAT BDR HAD ALSO FIRED AND HE, FRANKLY, WAS NOT SURE WHO HAD STARTED IT. PRESS STATES 100 HAVE BEEN KILLED AND "MANY" INJURED AMONG THE MUSLIMS; DG, NSI, SAID "SOME" WERE KILLED BUT IMPLIED THE PRESS NUMBER WAS EXAGGERATED. HE DID MAINTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT NUMBER OF 20,000 WAS FAIRLY ACCURATE. BANGLADESH RED CROSS HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSIST IN MEDICAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION WORK IN THE AREA. DG, NSI, ADDED THAT TASK WOULD SOON BE (IF IT WAS NOT ALREADY) TOO MUCH FOR RED CROSS AND APPEAL MIGHT BE MADE FOR ICRC AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

4. DG, NSI, SAID THAT DURING MEETING WITH BURMESE FOREIGN MINISTER IN DACCA, BDG HAD ACCEPTED BURMESE REQUEST THAT ISSUE REMAIN A BILATERAL ONE AND, SPECIFICALLY, AGREED NOT TO RAISE IT AT DAKAR CONFERENCE OF ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS. CONFIDENTIAL

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IF IT WERE RAISED AT DAKAR BY A THIRD PARTY, BDG AGREED TO SAY THAT IT WAS A BILATERAL MATTER AND BDG PREFERRED TO HANDLE IT THAT WAY. ACCORDING TO HIM, LIBYA HAS ALREADY RAISED SUBJECT WITH BDG AND WAS WILLING TO BRING IT UP IN DAKAR.

5. BOTH DG, NSI, AND KAZI JALALUDDIN AHMAD (WHO WAS A MEMBER OF BANGLADESH DELEGATION WHICH VISITED RANGOON EARLIER THIS MONTH) HAVE IN LAST TWO DAYS REHEARSED TO POLCOUNSELOR THE SUBSTANCE OF PROBLEM WHICH RUNS ALONG LINES REPORTED IN REFTEL (A). BOTH GAVE SOME CLARIFICATION ON THE IDENTIFY CARDS. THEY SAID THAT DURING THE UN PERIOD SOME ARAKANESE MUSLIMS WERE ISSUED NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARDS (NRCS) AND SOME OTHERS FOREIGNERS REGISTRATION CARDS (FRCS). UNU, THEY SAID, GRANTED SOME MEASURE OF AUTONOMY TO THE MUSLIMS AND GENERALLY LEFT THEM ALONE. UNDER NE WIN THE MUSLIMS WERE PLACED MORE DIRECTLY UNDER THE ARAKAN STATE GOVERNMENT (THE PRESENT GOVERNOR OF WHICH IS SEEN HERE AS THE MAJOR VILLAIN IN THE PIECE) AS PART OF A NATIONAL INTEGRATION PROGRAM. NEXT, ACCORDING TO THEM, NRC HOLDERS FOUND THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO OBTAIN RENEWALS OF THE CARDS AND BECAME, IN EFFECT, STATELESS. A CONCERTED EFFORT TO EVICT "STATELESS" AND "FOREIGN" PERSONS BEGAN, THE TWO

STATED, EARLY THIS YEAR, LEADING TO THE PRESENT DDICULTIES.

6. THE TWO SAID THAT THE BDG POSITION IS THAT THE MUSLIMS ARE BURMESE RESPONSIBILIY AND NOTED THAT THE FAMILIES OF ALL CONCERNED HAVE BEEN IN THE ARAKAN AREA SINCE BEFORE THE SEPARATION OF BURMA FROM INDIA IN 1937. DG, NSI, (WHO WAS FORMERLY ATTACHED TO THE BANGLADESH EMBASSY IN RANGOON) SAID THAT THE MUSLIMS HAVE RETAINED A SEPARATE IDENTIFY IN LANGUAGE AS WELL AS RELIGION. HE ALSO NOTED THAT IN 1947, WHEN PAKISTAN WAS CREATED, JINNAH REBUFFED AN ARAKANESE DELEGATION WHICH WISHED TO EXTEND THE PAKISTAN MOVEMENT TO INCLUDE PARTITION OF ARAKAN AND ITS INCORPORATION INTO PAKISTAN. INTERESTINGLY, JALAL CLAIMED THAT DG, NSI (S.A. HAKIM) MEDDLED IN ARAKAN AFFAIRS WHEN HE WAS THE BANGLADESH INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
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IN RANGOON AND THAT DID NOT HELP THE SITUATION.

7. NOW THAT THE PRESS HAS CARRIED THE STORY (IN ONE VERSION) AND THE CHIEFS OF MISSION HAVE BEEN BRIEFED WE CAN EXPECT MORE ON THE SUBJECT AND AN UNEASINESS, AT LEAST, IN BURMA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS.
SCHNEIDER

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